



Bay County Conservancy, Inc.

Saving Land in Northwest Florida

P.O. Box 1122 Panama City, FL 32402
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Sept. 2014 Newsletter
www.baycountyconservancy.org

The Gift of Donating Land:

Why do families find value and pleasure from donating, preserving and helping to fund land projects?



Nancy Harris, Candis Harbison, Mary Thieme and Ron Houser put up a sign dedicating the Hazel & Herselle Wilderness Preserve in Calhoun County.

Slogging through the swamp, past fearsome snakes, to go fishing with “Granny” Rena Lane Fields, who would sometimes whip out her cast iron skillet and cook the fish they caught right on the banks of the fishing hole, is a favorite memory of **Ann Clarke Snell, Roy Clarke, Jr., and Myra Clarke Worsham**. In fact, these memories are so dear to them that they wanted to preserve the land on which some of these activities took place in the hope that future generations of children might have a chance to romp in the woods.

Twenty-four acres of creek, swamp, and forest fronting on Highway 69 south of Blountstown were conveyed to the Bay County Conservancy by the siblings, in a combination of donation and purchase, in honor of their mother Hazel Fields Clarke and their aunt Herselle Fields McBride. A sign was recently placed on the property to indicate that it is open to the public during daylight hours for nature study and exploration.

Also located on the property is the Woods Cemetery, where historic graves of members of the Clarke, Yon, and McBride families, among others, can be found. Sadly, many gravestones tell of children who were unable to survive primitive living conditions in the Nineteenth Century. The cemetery can be accessed by county-maintained Woods Cemetery Road off Highway 69.

- Candis Harbison

For the love of the land

In most cases, families who donate property to the Bay County Conservancy love their land and want to give it to someone who will protect and cherish the legacy as they have. Many wish to ensure that their property will continue to support wildlife, not urban sprawl. And perhaps most importantly, they want good stewardship of the land to continue after they're gone.



Mary Ola Reynolds Miller (1916-2011) donated 1/3 acre to BCC in 2002. Today, the Palm Preserve on Beach Drive serves as an important stormwater retention area amid the surrounding asphalt and cement. The preserve is home to 70 native palm trees and a wildflower garden.

Other persons who have donated land to the BCC will be featured in future stories. They include the Panhandle Audubon Society (original 20 acres at Tumble Creek Nature Preserve), Lehman Holder and Donna Albert (Doreen Miley Holder Preserve), Duncan and Eugenia McNaughton (McNaughton Preserve), Joanne Bourland (Louis J. Sturke Preserve), and Tully Park donors Terri Cruz, Katee Tully, and Lynn Salmon.

Air Potato Round-Up!

Earlier this year, with the help of volunteers from the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bay County, a portion of BCC's Audubon Nature Preserve came one step closer to being air potato free! Air potato (*Dioscorea bulbifera*) is a non-native, invasive vine that is spreading through natural areas of Florida and destroying native habitat at an alarming rate. The rapid-growing vine produces aerial tubers that fall to the ground in the late fall and winter and produce new vines that sprout in the spring.



A member of the yam family, the air potato is covered with heart-shaped leaves. The plant is cultivated in West Africa for the edible tubers. However, the uncultivated form that is invading Florida is not edible, is very bitter and may be poisonous. One vine can grow 60 to 70 feet in length at the rate of 8 inches a day and each vine can produce up to two hundred potatoes.

Prevention is a key step in the management of air potato. Even small potatoes sprout easily to form new plants. Hand collection and removal of above-ground potatoes and digging up and removing underground tubers helps to eliminate small populations of the plants.



The Conservancy targeted an air potato infestation at the edge of a swampy area of Audubon Nature Preserve. Volunteers with buckets and bags hand-picked potatoes hanging from vines and lying on the ground in the leaf litter. The potatoes were then weighed on a scale and bagged for disposal. In total, the volunteer group collected 368 pounds of air potatoes – not too shabby for a novice potato-removal crew! Bay County Conservancy also provided workers with a little additional incentive and offered prizes to the person(s) who collected the “most potatoes”, “largest potato”, and “strangest-looking potato”.

Want to join us next time? Save the date: January 24, 2015! Air Potato Round-Up 2015! Be sure to check our website, www.baycountyconservancy.org, and follow us on Facebook for announcements. Your help is truly appreciated!



Photos, clockwise:

Volunteers bring buckets of air potatoes to the weighing station; BCC President **Candis Harbison** awards **Janet Cross** for collecting the most potatoes; candidates for the “strangest potato” award; and finally, two totes full of invasive air potatoes.

Marjorie's Magical Marsh—Symone's Sanctimonious Swamp



BCC is in partnership with the Florida, Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for restoration of Panama City Crayfish (PCC) efforts. This parcel was selected as a good PCC restoration site if it could be returned to historic conditions. The FWS funded research of the site to establish historic conditions in 2010 and provide the basis of restoration. Since then, two restoration projects have been completed.

In 2011-12, a 6.4 acre area of the parcel was initially hand-cleared of woody vegetation and prescribe burned by the FWC. Significant regrowth has occurred. It was determined a re-treatment was required to maintain an open, herb-dominated condition by curtailing the regrowth of woody plants, especially titi. The re-treatment was completed this past August. The project was conducted by the FWC and their initial assessment is that the project is very successful. It is the intention of FWC to place signage at the site to describe what has been accomplished and educate the public about the project.

- Phil Mount

On the Trail at Tumble Creek Nature Preserve

In early summer, **Ron Houser, Phil Mount** and **Teresa Nooney** took a GPS, loppers and a can of bright yellow paint up to Tumble Creek Nature Preserve in Washington County to begin the process of marking out a walking path through a section of this diverse woodland property. Tumble Creek began humbly enough in 2000 when the Panhandle Audubon Society of Marianna disbanded and invited Bay County Conservancy to assume stewardship of 20 acres of land. Located about 38 miles north of Lynn Haven, west of Highway 231, the property was in the Econfina Creek watershed and warranted protection.

Since that time, BCC has worked hard to acquire adjoining land parcels to increase the size of the preserve. Today, Tumble Creek consists of nearly 82 acres—land that is now protected forever for future generations to enjoy.



Above: **Phil Mount** and **Ron Houser** paint blaze marks on a tree along the trail at Tumble Creek.

Below: **Ted Wilson** and **Al Clare** clear branches and brush.



In June, **Candis Harbison, Al Clare, Ted Wilson, Ron Houser** and **Teresa Nooney** were back at Tumble Creek to clear brush and branches for a trail. The Conservancy has an ongoing need for volunteers interested in helping out from time to time (or on a regular basis!) on several of our preserves. Whether it is helping out with trail making, pulling up invasive non-native plants, or just visiting a preserve regularly to let us know if anything needs our immediate attention, we can find something

for you to do! If you would like to be notified when workdays and events are scheduled, please let us know. **Email:** tnooney@knology.net.



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Out and About

On June 14th, members of the BCC Board and some friends visited Tully Park—a Bayfront lot in St. George Plantation that was donated to the BCC by the daughters of the late Jimmy Tully. The lot will be managed by the St. George Plantation Owners' Association and is contiguous to state-owned land at Nick's Hole Cove.



Volunteers

Always Needed!

Call 872-8260 or

Email: tnooney@knology.net

Mission Statement

The Bay County Conservancy is a land trust dedicated to the preservation of environmentally sensitive lands in Northwest Florida.

Check us out at

www.baycountyconservancy.org

And LIKE us on Facebook!



Pictured: (back) Al Clare; (Middle row) Teresa Nooney, Rick Watson, Carolyn Parell, Joe Parell, Ron Houser; (Front) Daren Humphries Anna Martin, Candis Harbison.



BCC Membership Form

Yes! I want to help the Bay County Conservancy save open space, wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Name: _____

Level: (circle one): \$25-\$49 Contributor

Address: _____

\$50-\$199 Supporter

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Email: _____

\$1,000+ Lifetime

Please mail this form to:

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